

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application based on the following remarks are respectfully requested.

The specification has been amended to correct certain informalities, as explained below. Claims 28 and 30 have been amended to correct certain informalities. No new matter has been added.

Applicants respectfully request written acknowledgement that the Submission of Corrected Drawings filed on October 23, 2001 have been accepted by the Examiner and that the initial filing date of August 23, 2001 has been maintained because no new matter was added.

Formal drawings are submitted with this Amendment in response to the approval of the proposed drawing corrections of Figures 15a and 15b submitted on December 16, 2002.

In the Office Action dated February 10, 2003, the specification was objected to for not following the guidelines for the preferred layout for the specification of a utility application. The specification has been amended to insert the appropriate headings in the appropriate locations. Applicants respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn.

The specification was further objected to for not including a brief description of Figures 15a and 15b. The specification has been amended to include brief descriptions of both of these figures. No new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn.

In the Office Action, claims 1-30 were provisionally rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as claiming the same invention as that of claims 1-30 of copending Application No. 09/972,204. Because this is a provisional rejection, Applicants respectfully make note of the rejection and will take appropriate action in the prosecution of the copending application.

In the Office Action, claims 1-27 and 30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Miyaji et al. (U.S. Pat. 5,559,584) in view of Iizuka et al. (JP-62254352A). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

There is no motivation to combine Miyaji et al. and Iizuka et al. because Iizuka et al. is directed to a different problem. Iizuka et al. is directed to an ion implantation apparatus. In an ion implantation apparatus, the substrate becomes positively charged because it is being bombarded with ions. In Iizuka et al., the ion beam itself charges particles located inside the processing chamber. Therefore, the charged particles are attracted to the sample itself. An

electric or magnetic field is used to prevent the *charged particles* from approaching the sample.

Miyaji et al. merely teaches that an inert gas containing ions or an ionized inert gas can be used to remove a charge on a wafer. (col. 3, lns. 58-61; col. 7, lns. 5-8). Miyaji et al. does not teach or suggest that particles located in the system carry a charge. Also, nowhere does Miyaji et al. indicate that particulate contamination is a problem. Further, the use of the Iizuka et al. device would be disadvantageous in the Miyaji et al. apparatus. Miyaji et al. is directed to providing an inert gas atmosphere for the entire exposure area. (col. 3, lns. 46-57). The use of the Iizuka et al. device would affect the distribution of the ionized gas of the Miyaji et al. apparatus because any deflection of particles would also lead to the deflection of ions.

Therefore, there would have been no motivation to combine Iizuka et al. with Miyaji et al. at the time Applicants' invention was made. Hence, a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been made. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-27 and 30 are patentable and respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

In the Office Action, claims 28-29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Miyaji et al. in view of Iizuka et al. and further in view of McCullough (U.S. Pat. 6,445,439). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 28 claims a mask handling device with a particle shield that includes a heater for maintaining the mask at a temperature greater than its surroundings. Claim 29 claims a mask handling device with a particle shield that includes a plate and a cooler for maintaining the plate at a temperature less than the temperature of the mask.

As explained above, there was no motivation to combine Miyaji et al. and Iizuka et al. Further, McCullough discloses a thermal management device for use in an EUV system that substantially reduces *thermal distortion* in a reticle, a problem that is prevalent in EUV systems. (McCullough at col. 3, lines 19-21.) Thus, there is no motivation to use the thermal management device as disclosed by McCullough as a *particle shield* in a mask handling device of any lithographic system.

As a result, Applicants respectfully submit that there was no motivation to combine Miyaji et al., Iizuka et al., and McCullough at the time the Applicants' invention was made and, as a result, a *prima facie* case of obviousness cannot be made. Accordingly, Applicants

respectfully submit that claims 28-29 are patentable and respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, the claims are now believed to be in form for allowance, and such action is hereby solicited. If any point remains in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, please contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Attached is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached Appendix is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made".

All objections and rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and a Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

28. (Amended) A mask handling device according to Claim[s] 25, wherein said particle shield comprises a heater for maintaining said mask at a temperature greater than its surroundings.

30. (Amended) A mask handling device according to [any one of ]Claim 25, wherein said device is a mask storage box.

End of Appendix